

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS DRC FOLLOWED BEST PRACTICES WITH REGARD TO
EDUCATION REFORM IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT?

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Abstract

Democratic Republic of Congo economic performance has been stagnant due to the lack of human capital involvement in the labor force. In this research will evaluate the six elements of best practices of quality of education to evaluate its impact on human capital. This research assessed the current status of assessment, accountability, autonomy, attention to teachers, attention to early child development program, and attention to culture. Findings suggest that DRC will see growth in individuals if they identify the challenges and change current approaches in each element. The research concludes that the government revisit their education reform along with providing community support to ease the family's household responsibilities. This is a turnaround in providing high-quality individuals to maximize development impact.

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Introduction

Government and non-profit organizations provide guidance to countries that struggle to meet their development goals. However, even with assistance, low developing countries (LDC) struggle to achieve economic growth and stability. Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) encountered a long history of civil unrest and political instability that affected their economic performance. With the population of 85,281,024, 63% of the population are below the poverty line and 31.36 million people are unemployed (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019). The benefits of higher education toward development are paramount for society. In fact, DRC's vision for education reform is "the construction of an inclusive and quality education system that contributes effectively to national development, the promotion of peace and active democratic citizenship" (Care, Hedidar, Tsangala, & Kim, 2019). Focusing on education would reinforce globalization tremendously economically and socially. From an individual, family unit to the nation –states, education benefits all parties to have access to information and opportunities.

On May 2015, government officials and professional parties attended the World Education Forum in Incheon, South Korea, to discuss the 15-year education plan (UNESCO, 2016). The education plan is one of the tools to help countries achieve their Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) which was created to help narrate country progress. However, the problem with the SDG is whether the targets are attainable for countries due to their own current economic situation. "The DRC's development trajectory will depend on its ability to reap the benefits of its resource-rich territory, which will require large investments in human capital to transition to an economy based on improved productivity, innovation, and technology" (World

Bank Group, 2015, p. 1). Not everyone has access to pursue higher education. Education provides individuals access to information, job opportunities, financial income, and freedom of choice which results to society progress. The research addresses the importance of human capital, the relationship between education and development, and how education affects wages, skill sets, and infrastructure. In order to maximize development impact, this research highlights whether or not DRC follows best practices with regard to education reform.

Human Capital Theory

The theoretical framework that sees the relationship between education of people and economic development is called human capital theory (HCT). This theory referenced from Adam Smith, “Wealth of Nations,” mentioning education as an important instrument for economic prosperity. “Human capital theory emphasizes how education increase the productivity and efficiency of works by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically production human capability which is a product of innate abilities and investment in human beings” (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008, p. 479). Countries achieved exponential growth when making large investment into the educational sectors. For example, Finance Minister of Indonesia, Sri Mulyani Indrawati reported applying the HCT resulted, “allocating 20 percent of its budget to education and 5 percent to health, but has also delivered tangible results through policies and programs in early childhood education and development and universal health coverage” (The World Bank, 2017). The HCT not only improved early child development, but also strengthen health and governance. This is a victory in accomplishing Indonesia’s sustainable development long term goals. Another example of a country using the HCT is a close neighbor of DRC, Rwanda. They achieved their economic growth from 5.2% to 6.5% as of 2017 (Jagannathan, 2018). Rwandan

government created the largest conference called the “eLearning Africa 2018”, which focused on digital technology to achieve their development goals. “This strategy seeks to move away from agriculture and rely instead on services and knowledge as the new engines of economic growth, with the objective of achieving middle-income status in the near term.” (Jagannathan, 2018). With the same historical background as DRC, Rwanda’s transformational efforts on digital learning will eradicate poverty and stabilize their national income. Lastly, the HCT is a critical part of competitive advantage for new skills and innovation. With science and technology in the forefront, it is important to keep up with one’s competitors. In the article, “Singapore overtakes the US to become world’s most competitive country, World Economic Forum (WEF) says,” Singapore is named #1 in being the most competitive country in the world with a high life expectancy (Taylor, 2019). They applied the HCT into education to achieve exponential growth in their public sector, labor force, diversity and infrastructure. Singapore stated that investing in human capital was best “to withstand a global slowdown and revive domestic productivity” (Taylor, 2019). Their investment improved life expectancy until the age of 74 years old, where the United States is until 66 years old and China is 68 years old (Taylor, 2019). With Singapore focus on education, they provided highly talented citizens in the workforce and improved health-related quality of life.

Relationship between Economic Development and Education

Human Capital is one of the main reasons why there is a relationship between economic development and education. In order for the country to flourish from human capital, they need to have the appropriate knowledge and skill set. It is major key for economic growth. If people are unable to obtain basic education, it affects how well the country flourishes. The economy becomes more productive when people can execute critical thinking, literacy, and basic higher

education. The author of *Adult Education and Poverty Reduction: A Global Priority* went into detail about people from all ages do not have proper education and “all levels is an essential ingredient both to compensate for earlier educational inadequacies and to empower people with the necessary knowledge, understanding and skills for sustainable participation in a constantly changing the world” (PAUSE: ADULT EDUCATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION: A GLOBAL PRIORITY, 2004). In order to create a sustainable economy, the country relies on the capacity of its industry to innovate and advance. Industries uses resources and skills to create operational profit. Without operational profit, industries cannot sustain its activities. Industries depend on the people’s knowledge and skill set to improve productivity.

The Role of Higher Wages and Investment

One of the key components of human capital theory is the role of higher wages and investment. A person’s education level helps industries determine the best wage rate to give them. In the work industry, if labor demand does not keep up with labor supply then it affects wage rate (Ghilarducci, 2018). Low wage rate affects the quality of life someone can provide for his or her family and themselves. Individuals who meet all education and training requirements are capable of operating the task for a reasonable price. They are paid a higher wage rate and can perform the task more efficiently (Ghilarducci, 2018). The education level and training of a country’s workforce influence how a country’s economy will perform. This results in a positive relationship between education and development. Everyone’s educational background is different, but the end goal is to impact current and upcoming industries. Even though people do not need to have an extensive amount of knowledge to see economic growth, it is important to obtain basic education. An individual can have basic literacy and secondary level and still see economic growth (Radcliffe, 2019). However, some countries require people to pay school fee

such as uniforms, supplies, and if they attend boarding school, they pay for living expenses and tuition. Because of these financial costs, some people are unable to pay the expenses. Without proper education, countries will not be able to flourish, which affects economic performances.

Importance of Investing in New Skills and Technologies

Investing in new skills and technologies is essential for economic growth. It creates competitive advantage by companies outperforming their competitors. Skills and technologies changes how businesses operate, where companies can risk falling behind or going out of business. In order to be competitive, the company needs to be innovative, adaptive, and informative with the industry trends. These characteristics depend on skills and knowledge from their employees. If the company does not support their employees' education and training, it impacts operational cost. Elisabeth Natter, business owner and professional writer, quoted "the true asset is the quality of the skills and knowledge held by those employees and how they utilize them for the benefit of the company where they work" (Natter, 2018). Companies invest in their employees to help increase productivity in the workplace. The downfall will be that the employee seeks employment elsewhere, improving competitors' financial performance. Overall, employees continuously learn new skills and knowledge whether it is within the organization or personal. The more information an employee learns, the more they increase personal performance or competence on the job. Investing in new skills and technologies creates high-quality talent, leading to improve economic growth.

In the article, "Investing in People to Build Human Capital," the World Bank stated the challenges that poor countries go through are when they are competing against the scientific and technology trends (The World Bank, 2018). Technology is one of the fastest ways to stimulate

growth and for businesses to become competitive. The LDC face challenges when people are not enrolled in the school system. “Governments have a critical role to play in transforming human capital, because poverty, inequality, and other disadvantages hinder many families from investing in their children’s health and education” (Yong Kim, 2018). The government underfunds educational areas that need attention. Even though physical capital is essential, people need basic education to perform labor and to produce economic value. World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim indicated that talents are needed in order to compete in a changing world. This conversation led the World Bank Group to create a new measurement between “how human capital contributes to the productivity of the next generation of workers (Yong Kim, 2018).” The human capital index is stated to “measure the health, as well as the quantity and quality of education that a child born today can expect to achieve by the age of 18 (Yong Kim, 2018).” This measurement created the Human Capital Project (HCP), which hopes to prepare the workforce in the scientific and technological trends and combat against economic challenges. “The Human Capital Project will help countries in several areas: leveraging resources and increasing spending efficiency, aligning policies with results-focused investments, and addressing measurement and analytical gaps (The World Bank, 2018).”

Compare to other countries, DRC ranks 146 out of 157 countries with index value of 0.37 (The World Bank: Human Capital Project, 2018). The productivity of one individual in the workforce is 37% of what could be if they had benefited from complete education and good health. The 37% shows that productivity in the DRC is costing 63% of its nation’s income in the long run. Nurturing human capital will fuel the prosperity of the generation and the global economy. HCP helps create awareness and increase demand that impacts it. The HCP is assessed

by five indicators in reference to education and health. DRC HCP assessment shows that 43 out of 100 children are at risk of cognitive and physical limitations, 75% of 15 years old will survive until age 60, and there is a learning gap of 4.5 years where years of schooling are adjusted for quality of learning (The World Bank: Human Capital Project, 2018). New skills and technologies are an investment that pays off for everyone that aims to create a successful workforce.

Methodology

The purpose and significance of this research study is to figure out if DRC follows best practices of quality education. The authors of, “Framework for the Reform of Education Systems and Planning for Quality,” introduced six quality elements that helps measure quality of education based off of existing models, theory, and empirical evidence (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan; 2013). The six elements are assessment, accountability, autonomy, attention to teachers, attention to early child development, and attention to culture. The research summarizes the six quality elements and analyzes DRC current education reform. With gather information and findings, we can suggest approaches that may be overseen. The significance of the study will provide scholars, educators, practitioners, and citizens’ relevant information with the understanding of the educational benchmark. The audiences can use this study to understand DRC challenges and evaluate proper solutions.

DRC current background explains possible answers to the research question, “To what extent has DRC followed best practices with regard to education reform in order to maximize development impact?” that exist in several literatures. Literatures such as news articles, market research analysis, and policies will help me explore the six quality elements of education. There are wide ranges of literature on DRC current economic performances all thanks to the recent

scholars. Once the DRC quality education has been assessed, the research will provide suggestions based on their challenges that need continuous improvement.

Institutional Factors

The institutional factors focus on micro and macro levels which allows for economic, political and social contexts. At a micro-level, the approach focuses on student characteristics and at macro-level, the approach focuses on policy, programs and reforms (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013). The first element, assessment, helps measure student's quality of education through sampled-based tests, competency exams, and early grade reading assessment. The importance of this element is the student's ability to determine whether or not they understand the course material. Assessment affects student grades, placement, and instructional needs. Students need to be able to apply the material in the real world. With multiple and complex subjects, a standard assessment test is created as a benchmark for education systems. "Benchmarks and benchmark-based assessments are the cornerstone of education planning and reform aiming at quality" (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 7). It creates a metric when measuring student performance levels and contextual information domestically and internationally. Benchmarking helps teachers set standards and see if their teaching has been effective. Assessment determines whether or not the student's performance is being met against the educational standards. "It is becoming a growing priority of the global development community to rebuild or build assessment systems and link them with policies, practices, and interventions to improve teaching and learning" (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 7).

The next element, accountability, focuses on roles and responsibilities in the school system. Principals, teachers, students, and other relevant parties are major key in the success of

the school system. In order to measure performances, the relevant parties provide progress report which monitors the performance. Accountability is measured based on information flow such as teacher attendance, school committee functions, school report cards, budgets, and performance based salaries (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 10). Consequences and rewards can be addressed through policy design. However, not every country has a strong policy that defines roles and responsibilities clearly. This leads to corruption and affects school performances. What is expected from school principals, teachers, students, and other relevant parties helps rebuild new mechanisms to properly operate the school system and improve the learning environment.

The next element, autonomy, associate with school-based reform, school grants and accreditation. “The autonomy reform is closely linked with empowering the schools by devolving part or all of decision-making power regarding school management (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 8).” The authors listed four characteristics that makes a perfect autonomy reform.

- To empower a school by giving it ownership
- To reinforce the school’s resource base by mobilizing social forces
- To build up the relevance of the school’s education
- To enhance the school’s competitiveness

(Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 8).”

When administration give away their power, this allows teachers, students, and facilities to have flexibility and freedom in school to learn new skills and techniques. Individuals take on new

responsibilities making them more competitive. Autonomy creates an environment that increases satisfaction, reduce stress levels, eliminates corruptions, and improves workplace adaptability.

Structural Elements

The structural approach addresses gaps found in theories and findings that were neglected to achieving the goal of quality (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013). The authors clarified that the institutional factors did not acknowledge developing countries who did not fit the profile. They took the time to reevaluate the model and make it more current to today's society that would help push policymakers to reevaluate their education reform and policies.

One of the structural elements, attention to teachers, is the main driver on how successful the students will perform. Teachers provide students the tools to succeed in life. They shape the students to becoming well-rounded role models for the future generation. It is important to acknowledge teachers' contribution because they play a role in the economic development of the country. The authors listed three different attributes of what makes a good teacher qualified:

1. Selecting the right people into the profession
2. Teachers salary structure and
3. Developing teachers into effective instructors

(Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 12)."

When selecting the right person for the teaching position, the individual need to go though "rigorous selection procedures and establishing recommendations or requirements that would

help pick the best individual for this type of role in responsibility” (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 12). Being a teacher takes a lot of time and effort. When teachers are recognized for their hard work and awarded with a good salary, their performance increases to its full magnitude. Salary incentives attracts high quality teachers leading to maximizing student performance. Lastly, just like students, teachers have to continuous learn new things in order to become an effective instructor. “Designing and implementing effective teacher development for better teaching is instrumental for raising students learning outcomes” (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 14). If a country is unable to have good quality teachers, it affects the students’ performance and ability to be competitive in the job market.

The next element is called attention to early childhood development. The authors explain the importance of a young child to be fully engaged in their sensing pathways such as visions, hearing, languages and tapping into their cognitive function (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 15). Early childhood development programs teach the child different activities such as motor skills, object distinguishes, and writing system. When the child is not utilizing their sensing pathways and cognitive functions to its full potential, the child run the risk of isolation, speech delays, struggles with interpersonal relationships, and many more. “The countries that invest early would gain an advantage of developing different skill set of skills for this citizen in resulting economic process” (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 17). From stimulation to development, development programs provide physical, social, and psychological support that would help children achieve later in the future.

The last element of basic principles for quality education is called attention to culture. When policymakers are evaluating education reforms, they take into the account of uncertainty avoidance. This characteristic means adapting to new values that may clash with existing values and any transition. People respond to the uncertainties in different ways and adapt along the way. “It is important for the reformers to recognize and mobilize those values to engage the intended changes for the purpose of improving education quality (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 17).” Acknowledging culture help create an assessment that would help policymakers find pain points and solutions for the education system. Another characteristic is being able to treat the child’s capabilities and interests as an individual. For explain, the administrative classes in certain countries are either one-on-one, military style, or hybrid. “China and Japan, students are organized into administrative classes that follow the same schedule of lessons regardless of students’ interests, while in an individualist society such as the United States, students’ lessons are organized by subject and each student has his or her own schedule that fits into their own interests and capabilities (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 18).” Lastly, the next trait for culture is called short-term and long-term orientations. There needs to be proper preparations in how policy execute decisions that might just focuses on quick benefits that sacrifices short- and long-term basis. For example, China school enrollment has increased quickly over the years, however government allocation decreased where “universities rely on cost-sharing (charging tuition and fees) as well as income generated through commercial activities” causing a financial burden to students” (Patrinos, Harry Anthony; Velez, Eduardo; Wang, Catherine Yan;, 2013, p. 18). Government allocation needs to accommodate culture in their community where enrollment and finances is not a burden.

The six elements explain the importance of creating an international benchmark at a micro and macro level that can accommodate developing countries while recognizing the attention of teachers, early child development, and culture. These elements are important to convince policymakers of any changes that needs to be evaluated especially activities that impacts the students and school systems. Continuous improvements will help individuals bring out their full potential in the world, while improving economic prosperity.

Obstacles to achieving Best Practices

Even though education benefits well-being, income, and infrastructure, there are some obstacles to achieving best practices. For example, the authors of Human Capital Theory: Implications for Educational Development believe that “the more political the goals of education, the more problematic the outcomes” (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008, p. 481). This quote means without well-establish educational policies and reforms, the outcome of the performance may be hard to achieve to specific development goals. It’s crucial for countries to abide by best practices that helps guide the research and development department, labor market, and people. Also, companies may change their standards on how job availabilities and wages should be evaluated once that has met their requirement because “raising the level of education in a society can under certain instances increase the inequalities in income distribution (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008, p. 481).” Overall, with the fluctuating market trends, human capital needs to be assessed and budget allocated properly in order to be successful. Companies will be able to open more job opportunities to people and infrastructures will be able bring in more profit. Valuing the education sector will require the importance of continuous improvement in skills and technologies to keep up with the market trends. However, DRC encounters several obstacles

when trying to achieve best practices against the six elements resulting in corruption, delays, and loss of businesses.

DRC Assessment

The student outcome sets a factor that initiates area of improvement within the education system. In the World Bank Country Study “Education in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Priorities and Options for regeneration,” the document had data information dated in the year 2000 – 2001 of students results. It was difficult to find the most recent assessment scores. The document used data “from annual assessments of learning outcomes in language (French) and mathematics conducted by the Ministry since 1998–99 in a sample of schools covering about 5,000 students in each year” (The World Bank , 2005, p. 75). Before diving into the document, the current student evaluation process need to be identified. The name of the annual test is called “TENAFEP – test national de fin d’études primaires”, consisting of 25 items covering French, mathematics and culture generale (The World Bank , 2005, p. 75). The test is multiple choice focusing on tangible facts, and not on how student apply the knowledge. The multiple choice test is broken down into four sections which means “students score 25% even by chance, which can leave writing ability not being evaluated” (The World Bank , 2005, p. 76). With over 5,000 participating on the test, TENAFEP information only record pass rates leaving quality of the data unreliable and difficult to measure student performance. In conclusion, the TENAFEP passing rate requirement was difficult to locate in order to assess the education system on local and provincial level.

On the French test, the Congolese primary student tested on language skills, word recognition, reading comprehension, and synonym and antonyms. The test results stated that the

average score from Congolese students were below 73% and corrected score below 64%.

Language skills, which is associating words with pictures, average grade was less than 36% and word recognition 73% (The World Bank , 2005, p. 79). Synonym and antonym average score 23%, and reading comprehension average score 36% with only 3% answered all questions right and 16% scored 0 (The World Bank , 2005, p. 79). This shows that the grammar, vocabulary, and writing average score to be very poor. Language skills is very important because it is the pre-requisite into other subject areas. Without these appropriate skills, the students are unable to apply oneself in everyday life.

On the mathematic test, the Congolese student performance was low. The average scored less than 48% overall on the numerical operations, geometrical concept, and problem solving. Numerical operations average score 41%, geometrical concept average score 20%, and problem solving less than 20% (The World Bank , 2005, p. 81). Problem solving average score was expected due to the low average score in reading comprehension. Problem solving, “require use of several competencies, including reading with comprehension to formulate the problem, deciding on a strategy to solve the problem and using the appropriate numerical operations (The World Bank , 2005, p. 82).” For the mathematic test conducted in 2000-2001, Congolese students’ performance were compared to a small sample size of students from France on the same test. When comparing Math scores against the French Students – there is a difference of 22-28% in numerical operations and geometric concepts. This result may be conflicted against the Congolese lack of reading comprehension.

As for the Congolese secondary level students, there were no archives of test scores. With majority of the students scoring low, examinations tailor to student's capabilities which leaves quality of education weak and performance rates unreliable to measure. For example, "The pass rate in Kinshasa is actually below the national rate—and this may reflect the larger number of candidates with a much wider dispersion of "preparedness" in the capital city than in other provinces" (The World Bank , 2005, p. 83). As for the culture general test, there were no further details on students' performance rates. Passing rate continues to fluctuate as it causes students to repeat the school level over again or drop out. They are unable to compete against the other schools and struggle with new information. Performance rates highlights the student outcome in measuring how much they know the subject areas and current information to improve. However, without the TENAFEP passing rate requirement, this research is unable to differentiate education standards. With the low performance rates from students, the DRC does not follow best practices in assessing quality education.

DRC Accountability

Not only does poor performances affect the quality of education, but also lack of accountability. It is measured based on information flow in reference to attendance of teachers, performance-based salaries, school report cards, budget and school functions. Due to lack of information on attendance of teachers, performance-based salaries, school report cards, and school functions, this research did further insights on Congolese government relationship with teachers, students, and school authorities in creating a stronger education system that impacts information flow. Even though the Congolese government made cautious efforts to strengthen the school system, it has been difficult for them to fund the education sector. DRC investment towards education has been declining drastically. From 2013 to 2017, DRC invested from 16%

to 11.741% (The World Bank, 2019) While reading numerous documentations, previous years have missing datasets which leads policymakers and researchers to rely on feedback from the international community such as the Public Expenditure Review (PER). PER “establish a baseline understanding of key fiscal management and policy challenges, highlight priority reform areas for policymakers, and set the agenda for the next phase of budgetary planning” (The World Bank 2017). In recent review, PER states that the government is not funding in the appropriate education sector where the economy would benefit growth. The government need more assistance in investing in areas within the education sectors that will help economic dividend grow.

The DRC government rely on the family household and international community to help fund the school system. PER review highlights that the government does not invest as much as other donors. “In 2013, the total cost of the education sector in the DRC amounted to 2,184 million USD (2,009 billion FC), with 73 percent (US\$1,594 million) of the contribution coming from households followed by 23 percent (US\$513 million) from the government and the remaining 4 percent (US\$77 million) from development partners” (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 37). The government need to take account the lack of funding to support their relevant stakeholders so they can provide their students their best effort. With millions of people facing economic hardships, the government should ease such responsibilities on teachers and families by increasing the national educational budget.

DRC Autonomy

The DRC struggle to fit the characteristics of well-designed autonomy reform. Their school system framework created in the hand of multiple players where it has impacted decision

making and accountabilities. During colonialism ruling, the education system was introduced by the Belgium missionaries for the purpose of trade. Between 1948 – 1963, three universities were established under the Mobutu regime operated by religious organization called Catholic University of Luvain, Université Officielle du Congo, and a private university Université Libre du Congo (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 6). After the Mobutu regime, they decided schools will be government-led under the name National University of Zaire (UNAZA). In 1977 from religious organization to becoming government-led organization, the government passed the responsibilities back to the local communities because of “significant problems the central authorities faced in managing an over-centralized system, along with the difficult economic situation, which was aggravated by the étatisation policy, forcing the central authorities to devolve responsibilities back to the local communities” (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 7). With the constant transition of the education system, it created a weak foundation due to its undefined power and responsibilities. “The lack of a clear division of responsibilities in the administration and management of education between the public and the religious authorities persists to this day, which in turn undermines the possibility of enforcing a uniform national policy” (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 7). The relationship the DRC government has with the principals, teachers, school authorities and students created a poor environment that allows corruption, depression, and lack of workplace adaptability.

In order to enhance school’s competitiveness and reinforce resource base, students assess their learning objectives that aligns with today’s trends to become a competitive advantage. The students will be able to compete with others locally and globally in the job market. The challenges that DRC encounters is that students are currently not enrolling in fields that benefits

the labor market. They are not being updated and informed of information that will propel economic prosperity. Only 10% of students majored in science, engineering technology, while business, management, health sciences, social sciences and humanities has over 25% of students (Baharanyi, Karki, & Mutaleb, 2015, p. 19). DRC is limited with resources to compete against other countries. They are hindering students with outdated resources that leads to unfulfilled job positions. Students are unable to provide effective feedbacks and be reliable on the field. If more people were able to pursue higher education, it will change how the industry will forecast planning and development. With millions of Congolese facing economic hardships, implementing best practice will fulfill the market industry who are in need of employees and operational profits.

The current DRC education system is operated solely by the central state. They are the decision makers overseeing twenty-five provinces. The central state manages the curriculums, teaching method, and instructional materials. Even though autonomy best practices encourages local authorities to operate the school system, they are only involved with “the management and financing of the sector, given both limited capacity and limited financial resources, which are a result of a partially applied decentralization framework” (International Rescue Committee, 2017, p. 11). When administration give away their power, this allows teachers, students, and facilities to have flexibility and freedom in school to learn new skills and techniques. DRC limited the local opportunities to progress placing all students under one umbrella, ignoring cultural differences and social statuses. Individuals need flexibility and freedom where they are able to provide wide range of solutions and strengthen the school environment.

DRC Attention to Teachers

Teachers are measured based on selecting the right individual for the position, teacher salary structure, and becoming an effective instructor. Unqualified teachers affect the outcome of how students perform during assessments and their future careers. “Over 60 percent of primary teachers in Kinshasa, Bandundu, Kasai-Oriental and Kasai Occidental have 6 years of secondary education; this proportion is 52 percent in Katanga, but as low as 24 percent in Nord Kivu and Province Orientale (The World Bank , 2005, p. 6).” DRC hire individuals that are not equip for the job. Even if they are not equipped, there should be proper training to ensure they can fulfill the position. Teachers are effective when they continuously learning and growing in their profession. It benefits the students’ achievement in their personal life and career. With several DRC provinces, it is important to have qualified teachers in each area especially if there is a difference in cultural background. “Poor subject matter and language skills are the main problems of teacher quality – there never been a system of professional development or in-service training for primary teachers” (The World Bank , 2005, p. 86). If teachers are unable to learn new information and develop new skills, then it hinders the students’ learning environment. Hiring the right individual as a teacher will change the outcome of the students’ performances.

As for teacher salary structure, it goes through a bureaucratic, multi-layered system which creates corruptions and delays because of the payroll infrastructure called SECOPE (Brannelly, 2012, p. 8). It is modeled from the Belgium payment system from the 1960s. After Mobutu regime, the education budget has been cut from 25 cent to 7 cent of national expenditure, dropping teacher salaries from US\$68 to US\$27 (Brannelly, 2012, p. 8). Donors struggle to continue funding the government because of DRC’ large debt and transitional

government. They want “reforms to strengthen the financial management and auditing systems have been put in place in order to minimize the risks of leakages” (Brannelly, 2012, p. 8). The challenge with SECOPE is the poor system process to account for schools and teacher registration. The system encounters backlogs where it allows informal practices and inefficiencies. Number of legitimate teachers are not accounted and “their salaries are paid either from savings made by not paying teachers who have left the profession but whose names still exist on a payroll, or from school fees (Brannelly, 2012, p. 8).” Low payments and irregular payments created a coping mechanism resulting to second employment and perhaps corruption.

It is important for teachers to become effective instructors. In the DRC, the average age of teachers is 44 years old with 30% of teachers over the age of 50 (The World Bank , 2005, p. 85). Normally, teachers retire over the age of 55 or invest 30 years of services leaving 23% of existing teachers above the retirement age. “The high proportion of old teachers is due to the fact that teachers do not retire since the state is unable to pay either the pension or the gratuity payment” (The World Bank , 2005, p. 85). DRC hire older teachers because of their availability, unfortunately older teachers continue to work because they do not receive lump sum payments after retirement. If older teachers are not being supported, this lead to job satisfaction and high turnover, affecting student performances. The role of a teacher is not an easy task, where they need to be active, patient and up-to-date with new information. However, DRC teachers lack resources to provide their students basic materials. Resources are outdated resulting in low talents when students enter the job market. Journalist of *Innovation for Agricultural Training and Education*, Baharanyi, Karki, and Mutalen stated the reason for low percentage of enrollment is because “curricula have not been updated, modern materials are not available, and instructors do

not receive up-to-date training” (Baharanyi, Karki, & Mutaleb, 2015, p. 16). Teachers are unable to provide students updated information that will help them in the workforce. It’s important to be an effective instructor in order for high quality students to excel in meeting the benchmark of high-quality education.

DRC Attention to Early Child Development

Early child development is essential for quality of education, however young children encounter challenges that shifted their priorities to learn about safety versus practicing sensing pathways and cognitive functions. For a long period of time, civil wars and rebellion groups caused severe damage to the DRC infrastructure including school properties. The impact of the civil wars left thousands of students missing school, causing low enrollment and dropouts. Rebellion groups like “Democratic Forces for the Liberation Rwanda” and the “National Congress for the Defense of the People” has damaged the education system. “As of March 2013, the Education Cluster had received 133 reports of schools affected by looting and damage in North Kivu” (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack 2019). The vast size of the country and poor infrastructure makes it difficult for police force to respond to attacks. Students fear to attend school with the possibility of being violated, kidnapped, or killed. The cause of the civil war has increased the low enrollment and dropout rates leading to impact early child development.

The World Bank reported policies in the area of early childhood development to help strengthen DRC education system. “The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) evaluates the quality of education policies against evidence-based global standards, using new diagnostic tools and detailed policy data” (World Bank Group, 2014) . The report

provided DRC policy options and recommendations to implement early childhood development programs while congratulating nonprofit organizations assistance with the younger generation. The government relies on nonprofit organizations to help provide preschool education, safety, financial and enrollment support. For example, War Child education program supports early child development, providing support to parents and teachers. “Our programme combines education, community child protection, psychosocial support and vocational training to empower children and adolescents (War Child UK, 2020).” They have been supporting the community since 1993. UNICEF is another non-profit organization whose purpose is to provide educational resources and a safe environment for children and young adults. They made tremendous impact despite the lack of funding they receive to overcome diseases, rebel armed forces, and school resources. “When individuals who have experienced long periods of poverty enter the workforce, their contributions may be restricted or minimal, while others may not enter the workforce at all (Brown, 2011).” If children felt safer in their environment, it would encourage children to shift their mindset from safety mode to learning mode. They will be more opportunities to focus in school, which is vital for the early stages of child development.

DRC Attention to Culture

The last element, attention to culture, faces many challenges in order to support quality education. The element stresses uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and short term and long-term orientation. In the classroom, the administrative style is fluid where uncertainty avoidance and individualism clashes when it involve traditional perspective. For example, in the article of “Only 600 girls to sit Primary Leaving Examination in Nebbi as dropout takes toll,” the school district explained the pressure young students face to help pay the family household expenses before completing primary school (Daily Monitor, 2019). “Parents force their daughters to marry

in order to generate wealth for the family while others are kept at home to look after their siblings” (Daily Monitor, 2019). The children’s capabilities and interests are based on the parents’ needs and wants. This traditional outlook towards male and females has caused a gap in furthering their education. The gap has led young girls to be married and young boys to feel indebted to provide for the family household.

The French language examination requirements is an example of uncertainty avoidance. DRC citizens speaks a total of 242 languages which the official language is French. After French is four indigenous languages called Kituba, Lingala, Swahili and Tshiluba. Where French is used as the medium of communication, the Congolese student return home speaking another language. With this difference, it hinders the student ability to excel in the French test. If there is a lack of resources to provide students to study the language, then the lack of exposure challenges student to progress in the next school level. The administration failed to identify culture being a huge influence for meeting best practices for high quality of education.

Short term and long-term orientations are the government responsibilities. They accommodate to the culture where enrollment and finances is not a burden. In the article, “DRC Students Drop Out as Parents Struggle To Pay Rising Required Teachers’ Bonuses,” parents are required to pay for teachers’ bonuses in order for their children to continue primary education (Nyirabihogo, 2017). Majority of family household in DRC meet the poverty threshold living on less than \$1.25 a day so they are unlikely to pay additional expenses. The community stressed their concerns stating that the school board has forgotten the importance of education for the younger generation. “School authorities yield to temptations to act more like accountants than

teachers” (Nyirabihogo 2017). The stress has caused parents to remove their children from school where they have more opportunities doing child labor. The education sector participants are allocated with 73% percent from households, 23 percent from government, and 4 percent from international organizations (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 37). The government need to take account the lack of funding to support their relevant stakeholders so the students can provide their best efforts at school and home.

Discussion

With gathered information and findings, the six elements of best practices for quality education assessed against DRC current situation. Through multiple research, DRC is not following best practices that would improve economic development. The challenges they encounter has impaired human capital. DRC provides low quality talents that influences the workforce, which causes economic performance to have a negative outcome. The DRC needs to take more actions on all six elements which is assessment, accountability, autonomy, attention to teachers, attention to early childhood development, and attention to culture. Policymakers need to review the current reform and provide proper solutions that will increase economic growth.

In the institutional approach, assessment helps measure student’s quality of education through sampled-based tests, competency exams, and early grade reading assessment. The DRC school system provides pass or fail ratings to their students. Numeric grades are not recorded, which makes it difficult to rank students’ performances. When students take their examination, they are scored on actual facts which does not allow students to apply their knowledge in the real world. The French and math test both score low, because the students lack reading comprehension. Since they are unable to read and write the language, it affects the students’

French and problem solving math scores. For accountability, the DRC lacked information on attendance of teachers, performance-based salaries, school report cards, and school functions. The research analyzed on the relationship the government has with all the school participants. Unfortunately, the government underfunds the school system which impacts the relevant parties. The government investment has been declining and are not allocated in proper areas. The relationship between the government and other school authorities are weak, affecting how they operate the school system and learning environment. As for autonomy, DRC did not practice empowering ownership, reinforcing resource base, building up accreditation, and enhancing competitiveness. The DRC government relationship with the principals, teachers, school authorities and students created a poor environment that allows corruption, depression, and lack of workplace adaptability. When administration give away their power, this allows individuals take on new responsibilities making them more competitive. However, the students are not competitive because they are not enrolled in working fields that benefits the labor market and lack school material resources. Lastly, central state controls all activities in the school system, leaving the local communities with no responsibilities.

In the structural approach, 30% of DRC teachers are over the retirement age of 55 years old and only 60% equipped with secondary education. Teachers are exhausted and unmotivated because do not receive any retirement funding and do not have school resources to satisfy the learning curriculum. Resources outdated result in low talents when students enter the job market. The DRC hires teachers that are not equipped for the job and do not offer professional training to develop their skill sets. These challenges leave the school system with unqualified teachers who are unable to become effective instructor. As for the teacher salary structure, SECOPE, it goes

through a bureaucratic, multi-layered system which creates many interruptions on their payments. Teachers are discouraged not only by the lack of resources and professional development, but also not being able to be paid on time. Low wages and delays trigger second employment and if the person is hopeless, bribery and corruption. The next element, early childhood development, has been affected by the civil war, where young children do not attend school. The DRC take recommendation from SABER report that provides policy options and recommendations to implement early childhood development program. Since the program is under way, DRC relies on nonprofit organizations with providing the younger generation with school materials and a safe environment. Even with the non-profit organization participation, the government does not provide enough funding for them to assist all children. Lastly, the DRC attention to culture is not being acknowledged in language, traditional perspective and social class. The DRC has over 242 languages spoken in the region. It affects the classroom structure when French is used as the medium of communication. Traditional outlook impacts the children responsibilities when it affects family household, so boys and girls have a gap in furthering their education. As for short term and long-term orientation, the government causes stress on the community. They rely on the community to provide safety, guidance, support, and finances even though families make less than \$1.25 per day. The financial stress causes parents to remove their children from school where the children are unable to reach minimal proficiency and help boost economic growth in the future.

Conclusion

In order to attack DRC quality education pain points, the government needs to review quality education best practices. “Steering the education sector in the right direction in order to address its most pressing needs and plan for its development requires a clear understanding of

the issues at hand, their causes and the most effective ways to respond (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 15).” For the structural approach, a strong assessment is major key for student to see how they are doing in the classroom. Instead of a pass or fail rating, there are other options to translate grades. For example, schools provide students letter grades that associate in GPA calculations. It helps rank the student’s performances in numeric form and letter form. The DRC school system should keep records of the scores to help evaluate learning objectives at each school level. As for the examination, since the DRC students are taking the same test as the students in France, the school system can use the same education standards. It will provide raw data against their competitor and motivate the students. Assessment helps students and teachers so the school can evaluate the current conditions and desired conditions. As for accountability, there needs to be data information on attendance of teachers, performance-based salaries, school report cards, and school functions. This information is important because policy makers can evaluate relevant parties’ progress. As for autonomy, DRC educational framework had a weak foundation with central state controlling 25 local areas. The expectation from school principals, teachers, students, and other relevant parties helps rebuild new mechanisms to properly operate the school system and improve the learning environment. Learners need to have ownership of their education and professional development. DRC government should give responsibilities to the local communities, who is knowledgeable of their environment and traditional outlook. Each individual will play a role in creating programs and healthy competition, which will contribute to achieving success.

As for the structural approach, teachers are the main drivers for students’ success. The school system needs to hire qualified candidates who are willing to become effective instructors. With student poor examination scores, instructors need to be able to teach the official language

along with having the right resources. Also, teacher salary structure needs a new processing system that will pay teachers in a timely manner. This requires assessing the current pay system identifying proper recommendations that will be implemented resulting on time payments. Attention to early child development has policy options and recommendations that DRC can choose from. However, the government need to help implement and fund the chosen solution without pressuring nonprofit organizations and local communities. Lastly, attention to culture is difficult to bypass. An assessment needs to be provided in order for every student to communicate effective in school. Without a strong language foundation, the students are unable to pass the French test and mathematical problem solving against other school competitors. All six elements impact the labor forces which results in human capital enhancing low economic performances and a decline in economic growth.

For further analysis, selecting a country that has successful thrive in best practices and excels in both education and development would be a template for DRC to mimic from. They can use a particular educational policy populated successful educational outcomes that will change the country development situation. With frequent turnovers, financial issues, and social issues, it has been difficult to analysis what they need to do to provide sustainability. This research will benefit scholars and policymakers in finding a way to alleviate economic struggles and provide assistance to the DRC in attentive areas.

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Curriculum Vitae

Linda N. Walton is a Senior Federal consultant specializing in Program Management and governance in the Public Sector Enterprise Application. Ms. Walton has performed various of positions since her hire progressing from junior support roles to security accesses and configuration management auditing for over 200 large complex applications. She provides great attention to detail with a deep understanding of the importance of defining and executing these processes well to the overall success of our projects. She combines this expertise with skills in change management, training and quality management efforts for Enterprise Application projects through her work supporting those teams on her assignments.

Through schooling, internships, volunteer work, and her multiple federal projects, Ms. Walton has learned the importance of collaboration and dedication for a successful outcome.